

KNOWLEDGE BY DESCRIPTION

MORRIS LAZEROWITZ

THIS PAPER IS A SELECTED PART OF A THESIS PRESENTED
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

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IN THIS paper I propose to consider propositions of a special sub-class of propositions, with a view to determining as precisely as possible their logical as well as their epistemological status. The kind of propositions I have in mind are such as are usually associated with so-called Judgments of Perception, in which descriptive complexes involving sense-data items are believed, or disbelieved, to apply uniquely to particular physical objects. A proposition belonging to this class, which is a proper subset of the class of propositions involving Definite Descriptions,¹ will be, for example, the proposition 'This sheet of paper is white', the logical form of which, expressed in the symbolism of modern logic, would be explicitly exhibited by the following expression [$f(x) = x$ is a sheet of paper; $g(x) = x$ is white; this (standing for a sense-datum) = a ; $R(a, x) = a$ is a manifestation of x , where 'manifestation of' may have any of a variety of meanings, including 'surface of']:

$$(\exists x): R(a, x): (y) \cdot R(a, y) \supset (y = x): f(x) \cdot g(x),$$

to the effect that there exists one and only one x of which a is a manifestation, and that x is both a sheet of paper and white.

So far as I am aware, no philosophers, with the exception of a group of realists, hold views from which it follows that physical objects are ever directly presented to our apprehension, or that we ever could have knowledge by acquaintance of the 'external world'. It is clear enough that any such view would be a mistaken one. For it would also have to follow from it that we could never be in error when judging that perceived sense-data are manifestations of certain things in the external world; whereas all philosophers must take it to be a commonsense *fact* that we *do* often pronounce false judgments of perception.

Some philosophers, however, who hold no direct-apprehension view regarding physical objects, yet insist, if I understand them rightly, that we can and often do *know* that such objects as buildings and trees and other persons exist. I am not entirely clear as to what precisely these philosophers intend us to understand by the

¹For convenience I shall henceforth give the designation 'Definite Descriptions' to such propositions.



word 'knowledge', as they use it when designating cognitive experiences which consist in the apprehension, in some sense, of objects ordinarily thought of as *transcending* immediate experience. They seem to use it in such a way that though we could not be said to stand in the relation of direct mental *contact* with physical objects we yet could be said to *know* them (in the sense of knowing that they exist). In this regard, they make a distinction between two connected meanings of the term 'knowledge'; namely, between knowledge as *direct* and knowledge as *indirect*, which, I take it, correspond respectively to those meanings to which Russell has assigned the expressions 'knowledge by acquaintance' and 'knowledge by description'. It is in the latter sense, *i.e.* in the sense in which we are said to know objects indirectly or descriptively, that the word 'knowledge' is used by them to designate cognitive cases in which we apprehend teacups and stars. On their view, then, many, if not all, so-called judgments of perception will constitute cases of indirect, or descriptive, knowledge.

The meaning of 'indirect knowledge' is not altogether clear; and in attempting to determine precisely its meaning, it will be best to consider it in connection with the meaning of direct 'knowledge' or 'acquaintance'. It is not, I think, difficult to ascertain precisely the meaning of the latter. According to Russell, "We shall say that we have acquaintance with anything of which we are directly aware, without the intermediary of any process of inference or of any knowledge of truths".² This is to say that we have knowledge by acquaintance that *p*, *e.g.* 'This is a pain' or 'This sense-datum is red', when and only when *p*'s truth-value is directly presented to us with *p*, as a factor in it. In such a case we could ascertain *p*'s truth-status, or *p*'s factual-status, should *p* be a fact, by an inspection of *p alone*, and could thus be said to have acquaintance with its truth- or factual-status without the need either of inferring from, or of having acquaintance with, other 'truths'. The meaning of 'knowledge' in this usage is obvious. It means, at least in part, *cognitive indubitability*, such that anyone directly knowing that *p* could entertain no *rational doubt* that *p*.

In the case of indirect, or descriptive, knowledge, an object

² B. Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy* 73.

known is not directly presented to the mind apprehending it. A *description* *p* of the object, *e.g.*, a table, *intervenes* between the mind and the table, where *p* stands in the relation of acquaintance to the mind and the table does not stand in such a relation to it, but is known, supposedly, by it through the intermediation of *p*; *i.e.*, the table stands in the indirect relation of being known *through* *p*. "There is no state of mind in which we are directly aware of the table; all our knowledge of the table is really knowledge of *truths*, and the actual thing which is the table is not, strictly speaking, known to us at all. We know a description, and we know that there is just one object to which this description applies, though the object itself is not directly known to us. In such a case, we say that our knowledge of the object is knowledge by description."³ This kind of knowledge is supposed to "enable us to pass beyond the limits of our private experience. In spite of the fact that we can only know truths which are wholly composed of terms which we have experienced in acquaintance, we can yet have knowledge by description of things which we have never experienced."⁴ Accordingly, it is held that we can have either of *two kinds* of knowledge of empirical facts: "Understanding, then, that by 'know' I mean 'have actualized knowledge of', I hold that at different moments in our lives we know a great many empirical facts. And I also hold that in a certain sense we know a great many of these facts *directly*, and a great many only *indirectly*. I should say that at most moments of our waking lives we are both knowing a good many empirical facts directly and a good many indirectly."⁵

From this we can, I think, discern clearly the meaning of 'knowledge' as it is used in conjunction with 'indirect'. It is to be noted, for one thing, that cases of *both* kinds of apprehension, *e.g.*, cases in which we apprehend sense-data and cases in which we are aware of chairs, are designated by the same word, *knowledge*; so that though our apprehension of a chair, when we know it indirectly, would differ in important respects from that in which we apprehend a sense-datum, we should in both cases be said to *know* the objects in question. And it is to be supposed that by 'knowing' they mean in each instance precisely the *same* thing, at

³ B. Russell, *op. cit.* 74-75.

⁴ B. Russell, *op. cit.* 92.

⁵ G. E. Moore, "Indirect Knowledge", *Proc. Aristot. Soc.*, Suppl. IX, 23.

least generically, even though indirect knowing would be different in some respects from direct knowing.

It thus seems that they are using 'knowledge' univocally to mean one and the same thing, of which *indirect* and *direct* are *two forms*, or *species*; and therefore that at least part of what they must mean by it is *rational indubitability* of apprehension, such that anyone knowing an object α , whether directly or indirectly, could not possibly doubt, or be mistaken about, the existence of α . This meaning accords with the usual meaning of 'knowledge' in the English language, in which 'S *falsely* knows (either directly or indirectly) that p' is self-contradictory. " 'S knows that p, and p' or 'S perceives that p, and p' do express tautologies; and 'S knows that p, but not-p' or 'S perceives that p, but not-p' do express contradictions.'" That this is their usage of 'knowledge' in the phrase, 'indirect knowledge', is substantiated by their insistence that our apprehension of physical objects is neither one of belief nor of knowledge of the probability that there exist certain empirical facts not directly given: "But do I really *know* all the propositions in (1) to be true? Isn't it possible that I merely believe them or know them to be highly probable? In answer to this question I think I have nothing better to say than that it seems to me that I *do* know them with certainty."⁷

In this sense of 'knowledge' it is quite clear that indirect knowledge is distinct from and incompatible with *true belief*, though it is very easy to confuse them. From a fact of the form 'S believes *truly* that p' it follows strictly that p. For this reason it might be thought that such a fact would be equivalent to a fact of the form 'S knows that p', where p is a true description of a transcendent empirical fact; since from a fact of the latter kind it also follows strictly that p. But it must be observed that belief is *intrinsically fallible*,⁸ such that S himself could *not know*, at the time he does in point of fact believe truly, that he does believe truly. This is to say, from a *fact* of the form 'S believes truly that p' it does follow

⁶ G. E. Moore, "Facts and Propositions", *Proc. Artist. Soc.*, Suppl. VII, 194.

⁷ G. E. Moore, "A Defense of Common Sense", *Contemp. British Phil.*, 206.

⁸ G. E. Moore, "Facts and Propositions", *Proc. Artist. Soc.*, Suppl. VII, 194.

that p , but it does *not* follow that 'S knows the fact that he truly believes that p '; because such a fact would be a fact *about* and one *extrinsic* to S's judgment, the fallible nature of which would *preclude* his knowing that fact at the time he was holding his belief.

That we often have true beliefs about transcendent empirical facts is hardly to be doubted. It is also clear that indirect knowledge of *some* facts can be and sometimes is had. At present, for example, I know that there exists a number satisfying the properties of being prime, being greater than 53, and being a divisor of $(53! + 1)$; that is, I *know*, without the possibility of entertaining any rational doubt whatever, that there exists a value of p , such that $p > 53$, $pn = 53! + 1$, $n \geq 1$. But, at the same time, I have no acquaintance with that number. I only know some of its properties and the *fact* that it exists. But my apprehension of it clearly constitutes an instance of knowing, although it is indirect, being 'based' on my direct knowledge of 'truths', or, more accurately, on *a priori* facts. It is based on my direct knowledge of the following facts: that no two successive natural numbers, both greater than 0, can have any divisors but 1 in common, and that this is the case in regard to such pairs of numbers as 53 and $53! + 1$; that 53 is a prime number; that, therefore, if $53! + 1$ contains any prime divisors greater than 1, they must be distinct from 53 or from any number less than 53 and greater than 1; and finally, that either $53! + 1$ contains a prime divisor greater than 53 or else that $53! + 1$ is itself the required prime. On my knowledge of these facts is *based* my knowledge that there necessarily exists a number satisfying the above properties, *i.e.*, that the proposition

$$(\exists p, n) \cdot (p > 53) \cdot (pn = 53! + 1) \cdot (n \geq 1)^9$$

describes an actual number. It is to be noted that this proposition is *necessarily* true, certifiable on logical grounds, *a priori*, since it is entailed exclusively by facts belonging to the domain of the *a priori*:

$$\sim \Diamond \sim (\exists p, n) \cdot (p > 53) \cdot (pn = 53! + 1) \cdot (n \geq 1).$$

Stated in general terms, this means that I know certain generic properties of numbers, and with regard to them, by *pure reason alone*, I can obtain direct knowledge of 'truths' or facts (*e.g.*, that

⁹ p denotes prime numbers only.

there exists an infinite number of prime numbers) which give me the knowledge that facts satisfying certain properties exist, without my having acquaintance with those facts.

The possibility of having indirect knowledge in the domain of the *a priori* is, thus, clear. But whether indirect knowledge can be had in the realm of *empirical* facts is very questionable. I shall attempt to show that this question must be answered in the negative, by demonstrating that the logical status of the only kind of propositions which apparently enable us to have knowledge of transcendent empirical facts is such that they could not possibly give rise to such knowledge.

We are told that our knowledge of empirical facts transcending our immediate awareness obtains from our direct knowledge of 'truths' about those facts. Obviously, if we are to have indirect knowledge of empirical facts we must know 'truths', in some sense, about those facts, since such transcendent facts could only be known, if they can be known at all, through the intermediation of truths, not 'falsehoods', about them. I am not certain, however, what precisely is to be understood by 'truths'. It is clear, for one thing, that they must be *propositions* of some sort, because propositions alone are supposed to be capable of being true, or of being 'truths'. And the question I propose to raise in this connection is whether such propositions are to be taken as *a priori* or as *contingent* truths.

The point I am here raising has never, so far as I am aware, been explicitly considered by those philosophers who hold that we can, and often do, possess indirect knowledge of empirical facts. My remarks in regard to what they could possibly mean by knowledge of 'truths' about transcendent empirical facts are not based on any arguments they present in favor of their position. So far as I am aware they offer no arguments in support of their theory, but simply assert it to be true. Thus Professor Moore says, in regard to certain propositions concerning transcendent empirical facts: ". . . it seems to me that I do know them with certainty." This of course is no demonstration; it does not arise out of the *analysis* of indirect knowledge. Moreover it is a flatly self-contradictory statement, unless by 'know' he means 'dispositionally know', which it is to be supposed he does not mean. It is to be

supposed that he is talking about 'actualized knowledge', *i.e.*, the propositions which he claims *actually* to know, with absolute certainty. And if by 'know' he does mean 'has actual knowledge', then he flatly contradicts himself, as the following consideration shows. From a fact of the kind (a) 'It *seems* to S that he knows that p' it does not follow that p, but it does follow that 'S *could* rationally doubt that p' (since he could rationally doubt that he knows that p); while from a fact of the form (b) 'S knows that p' it not only follows that p but also that 'S could *not* rationally doubt that p'. Professor Moore's statement, which combines (a) and (b), is thus conceptually non-significant, because from the conjunction (a) and (b) it follows that 'S both *could* and *could not* rationally doubt that p'.

To revert to the question regarding what is to be understood by 'truths'. From examples these philosophers have used to illustrate their theory it is to be gathered that by 'truths' they mean contingent propositions that are true. Stebbing, however, sometimes speaks as if the problem of indirect knowledge of empirical facts is a problem of *analysing facts* of which we have knowledge: "Accordingly, in my view, 'the problem of the external world' is not a problem of justifying an inference, or a belief; it is a problem of *analysing* what we know when we do know such facts."¹⁰ On the surface, this seems to be a very queer enunciation, because, if I am not mistaken, she seems to be saying that we can analyse transcendent facts, *i.e.*, *facts not directly given to our awareness*. How it is possible to *analyse* things not directly given to us she does not make clear. It would seem to be downright nonsense, *unless* she means to say that what we *actually* analyse are *propositions about* facts of the external world, which if they did truly describe empirical facts would result in our obtaining analyses *equivalent* to the analyses we would obtain if we were directly to analyse those facts. If *this* is what she means, then she intends to say that the problem of our knowledge of the external world is "a problem of analysing what we know *directly* when what we know directly gives us or enables us to have indirect knowledge of transcendent empirical facts". But she does not seem to mean this, for she also asserts that "*This table* is given when I am in fact

¹⁰ L. S. Stebbing, "Constructions", *Proc. Artist. Soc.* XXXIV, 27.

perceiving the table along with the sense-datum of which I can, by an effort, become immediately aware".¹¹ She is apparently asserting that the table is given, not through the intermediation of sense-data, but *along with* them; in spite of the fact that it must be supposed, if error is to be accounted for, that physical objects are not given *along with* the sense-data attributed to them, but rather that they *give rise* to sense-data and are apprehended or given *through* their sensory manifestations. And Stebbing seems to contradict herself on this point. She maintains the correctness of the "Principle of Reducibility to Acquaintance", namely that "Every proposition which we can understand must be composed wholly of constituents with which we are acquainted".¹² But she also seems to hold that the word 'this', in such a sentence as 'This table is massive', is used *demonstratively*, to designate what is *given along with* sense-data, *i.e.*, the table. Thus it would follow, according to the "Principle of Reducibility to Acquaintance", that in having acquaintance with such a proposition as 'This table is massive', which she holds we can have, we should have *acquaintance* with the object 'this' is designed to stand for, *i.e.*, the table. This stands in obvious contradiction to a further statement she makes: "But it is abundantly clear that *the table* is not a possible object of acquaintance to either gods or men."¹³

It should be obvious now how difficult it is to formulate precisely the view under consideration. I think, however, that the question I am raising regarding what is to be understood by 'truths' is highly pertinent to this view. It seems to me that by 'truths' the exponents of this view must mean either *a priori*, or analytic, truths, or else contingent propositions that are true. Now if it can be shown that the apprehension of *neither* kind of truths can give us indirect knowledge of the external world, it will be clear that this view is untenable.

It is not difficult to see that *a priori*, or analytic, propositions could not possibly be meant. Stebbing, however, seems to think that we can have *analytic* knowledge of matters of transcendent empirical fact, *i.e.*, knowledge of such fact obtained analytically. By this I take it she means, that from an analysis of *a priori* propo-

¹¹ L. S. Stebbing, *op. cit.* 27.

¹² L. S. Stebbing, *op. cit.* 20.

¹³ L. S. Stebbing, *op. cit.* 25

sitions such knowledge can be obtained. For it is difficult to see how an analysis of *contingent* propositions (which I will show cannot be known to be true without our having a logically prior acquaintance with the facts making them true) could lead to such *knowledge*. Let us suppose, then, that by 'truths' is to be understood *a priori* truths, such that if we had knowledge by acquaintance of them we could also derive from them indirect knowledge of certain empirical facts. Is this a significant supposition?

One thing implied by such a view is that by pure reason alone it is possible, by analysing such directly presented propositions, to obtain knowledge of transcendent empirical facts. Of course, the obtained knowledge of such facts will be indirect; and this will entail the direct knowledge of a truth (true description) or set of truths about those facts. From a fact of the form 'S indirectly knows α ' it follows that 'S directly knows that p', where p is a proposition truly describing α ; *i.e.*, indirect knowledge of a fact entails acquaintance with a description of it. Such obtained truths will, plainly, have to be *contingent*, because they will be descriptions of *empirical* facts. Their truth-values will be determined *solely* by the existence or non-existence of the kinds of facts which they describe and to which they refer. Hence, on this supposition, we could analytically derive contingent truths from *a priori* truths. This I think is self-contradictory.

According to this hypothesis, direct knowledge that p (where p is a contingent truth to the effect that there exists a transcendent empirical fact of a certain kind described by the proposition p) obtains from or is 'based on' direct knowledge of a set of *a priori* truths φ , such that from a fact of the form 'S directly knows that φ ' it follows that S could, from an analysis of φ , directly know that p. This implies that φ *entails* the contingent truth p; otherwise our knowledge that p could not be based on, or be analytically derived from, our knowledge that φ . Now it will be generally admitted that nothing can be both *a priori* and contingent, or, what is tantamount to this, that nothing can be both intrinsically certifiable and not intrinsically certifiable. It will also be admitted that all the consequences of an *a priori* truth must themselves be *a priori*. These are strictly logical dicta, a violation of which must result in logical contradiction. In consistency with these prin-

ciples, therefore, it would have to be held, in regard to this view: either (1), if p is supposed entailed by ϕ , that p is *not* contingent, whereas p *must* be contingent if it is to be a description of an empirical fact; or else (2) that p is contingent, but is not entailed by ϕ . In the latter case, which is the only possible one, our knowledge that p could not be based on our knowledge that ϕ . Consequently it is impossible that our knowledge of transcendent empirical fact be based on, or be analytically obtainable from, our knowledge of *a priori* truths.

It is patent, therefore, that by 'truths' can only be meant *contingent* propositions that are true. Furthermore it is clear that given a set of contingent truths it is possible, from the conjunction of any of the set, to derive analytically a good many further contingent truths. This is a well known fact in Postulate Theory. Hence, if we could *know* certain contingent truths we could, if we desired, derive explicit knowledge of a good many further truths entailed by the truths with which we have acquaintance. To illustrate, if I *knew* that this was a sheet of paper, I could also know that there was another side of it which I was not seeing. Thus from my knowledge that p (p = this is a sheet of paper) I could obtain knowledge that q (q = there is a side of this sheet of paper which I am not seeing), where q would be a contingent truth describing a transcendent empirical fact, *viz.*, the other side of this sheet of paper.

Can we, however, possibly have direct knowledge of contingent *truths* describing transcendent empirical facts?

I do not mean to suggest by this question that we cannot have acquaintance with contingent truths. We obviously can and often do have such acquaintance. But we must distinguish here between being acquainted with a (true) proposition, in the sense of knowing what we are expressing when we use words to express a proposition, and being acquainted with the *truth-value* of the proposition, *i.e.*, *knowing* the proposition, with which we have acquaintance, *to be true*. The first, at most, entails having acquaintance with all the factors *intrinsic* to the proposition; the second entails having acquaintance with a further fact *about*, and *not an item in*, the proposition, namely the fact that it is true. An instance of the first kind of knowledge would be expressed by the words

'S has acquaintance with p', while an instance of the second kind would be expressed by the words 'S knows *that* p', where the latter would entail the former, but not conversely. From a fact of the first kind, *e.g.*, S has acquaintance with the proposition 'There are ghosts', a fact of the second kind would never follow, *e.g.*, S knows that there are ghosts, since the latter would entail there being ghosts, while the former would not. This is an obvious distinction which must be made. We certainly can know contingent truths in the first sense. But can we also know them in the second sense? This is my question: Can we *know* that the contingent truths (about transcendent empirical facts) with which we have acquaintance *are* truths?

One point regarding contingent propositions has been made clear by the Cambridge group of philosophers, and especially by Russell in his Theory of Descriptions. This is that the truth-value of a contingent proposition is *not analytically certifiable*, *i.e.*, an analysis of a contingent proposition alone will not disclose its truth-value. Thus Russell says: "Whenever the grammatical subject of a proposition can be supposed not to exist without rendering the proposition meaningless, it is plain that the grammatical subject is not a proper name, *i.e.*, not a name directly representing some object."¹⁴ A direct consequence of this principle is that whenever the apparent subject of a proposition, *e.g.*, 'this table' in the proposition 'This table is massive', stands for no actual fact existing *in* the proposition, as its subject, it cannot be analytically determined, *within* the proposition, whether or not the proposition truly describes anything, that is, whether or not it has an ultimate subject to which it uniquely refers. This is often expressed in the form 'Every contingent proposition has a genuine contradictory'. If the above proposition is expressed in logical notation this becomes clear [$R(a, x) = a$ is a manifestation of x ; $f(x) = x$ is a table; $g(x) = x$ is massive]:

$$(\exists x): .(y): R(a, x): R(a, y) \supset (x=y): f(x).g(x).$$

If this is correct (as it certainly is), it follows that *no* contingent proposition about transcendent empirical fact is *intrinsically certifiable* to be true, or false. Otherwise, if it were intrinsically certi-

¹⁴ Russell and Whitehead, *Principia Mathematica* I 66.

fiable, it could have no actual contradictory; because its truth-value would then have to be intrinsic to it, which consequently would not allow its having a genuine negative. The truth-values of contingent propositions are determined *solely* by circumstances *external* to the propositions. And the actual facts in the external world making certain propositions true are the transcendent facts to which those propositions *refer*. Hence it is entirely impossible to ascertain, by an analysis of a given contingent proposition itself, the truth-value of the proposition; and so it is impossible to know, from an analytic inspection of it, whether or not it is true, *i.e.*, whether or not it describes a transcendent empirical fact. In order to *know* the truth-value of a contingent proposition, or to *know* that a contingent truth *is* a truth, we should obviously have to be *acquainted* with the fact which renders it true. Otherwise it would seem absolutely impossible to *know* it to be true.

This must be so; for since we cannot know a contingent truth to be true from an analysis of it, we must obtain that knowledge non-analytically, *i.e.*, by acquiring direct knowledge of the fact making it true. But this makes impossible the supposition that contingent truths can *give* us indirect knowledge of transcendent empirical facts, because our knowledge that such truths *are* truths entails our having *acquaintance* with the empirical facts of which knowledge of the truths was supposed to enable us to have *indirect* knowledge *only*. Without having acquaintance with the facts from which it follows that the contingent propositions we apprehend are true we could never, possibly, know the propositions to be truths. And since these philosophers do hold, for very good reasons, that we cannot have acquaintance with such objects as carpets and cigarettes, they cannot also hold, without contradicting themselves, that we can know the truth-values of propositions whose "apparent subjects" transcend our immediate experience. They cannot, thus, hold that we can have indirect knowledge of matters of transcendent empirical fact. This is to say that to hold, as they *do* hold, that contingent truths are not intrinsically certifiable is *inconsistent* with also holding that we can have knowledge of their truth-values *without* having direct knowledge of the facts making them true. Consequently it is inconsistent with holding that we can have indirect knowledge of transcendent empirical fact.

Stebbing asserts that "*givenness* is not equivalent to directness",¹⁵ and holds, further, that physical objects can be *given indirectly* to our apprehension. She is no doubt correct about the usage of the terms 'givenness' and 'directness'. But she also maintains, with regard to this distinction, that when physical objects are so given to our awareness we can *know* those objects to exist; though she nowhere makes clear *how* we can know that an object, which is in point of fact indirectly given to us, *is* given to us. Nor does she attempt to offer a criterion which would enable us to distinguish between propositions which, when apprehended, would result in our obtaining *knowledge* of transcendent empirical facts, and propositions which, when apprehended, would result only in our holding *beliefs*, or in our drawing inferences, that there do exist such facts. That is, she offers no criterion in accordance with which we could distinguish intrinsically between contingent truths and contingent falsehoods. An attempt to formulate such a principle must, obviously, end in failure.

It is certain to be admitted by everyone that nothing can be *given*, in any sense whatever of 'given', except as there exists something to be given. *Givenness entails existence*. It follows, therefore, that anything given, either directly or indirectly, exists. But it does *not* follow from this that when an object is given indirectly, through a description, the person to whom it is so given *knows* that the object, to which the description applies, exists. From a fact of the form 'S indirectly apprehends α ', or ' α is indirectly given to S', it does follow that α exists; and from a fact of the form 'S has acquaintance with the true proposition p', where p is a definite description of the transcendent empirical fact α , it follows that there exists something, α , which is indirectly given to S, through p. But it does not follow from either of two such equivalent facts that 'S *knows* p to be true', or that 'S *knows* that α is indirectly given to him, through p'. It does follow from a cognitive act in which something is indirectly apprehended that there *is* something which is indirectly apprehended; but it does *not* follow that a person having such a cognitive experience has the *further* cognitive experience of *knowing* that he is apprehending something indirectly given to him. This is a very easy confusion to

¹⁵ L. S. Stebbing, *op. cit.* 27.

make, because from facts of *both* kinds, 'S indirectly apprehends α ' and 'S knows that he indirectly apprehends α ', it follows that α exists.

Propositions about matters of transcendent empirical facts commonly associated with judgments of perception, must then be logically classified with those propositions whose truth-values are not intrinsically certifiable; *i.e.*, they must, logically, be classified as contingent propositions. Their epistemological status, consequently, must be such that they cannot enable us to have, or to obtain, indirect *knowledge* of the facts to which they refer, if they do refer to actual facts; *i.e.*, they cannot be known by us to be truths without our having a logically prior acquaintance with the facts making them truths.

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